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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 1998
Agenda item 5

Draft report

Addendum

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II. Control and limitation of documentation

A. Review of the late issuance of documentation

Introduction and overview

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 23 of section B of its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, requested the Committee on Conferences to review the late issuance of documents and to suggest remedial action for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

2. At its 407th and 408th meetings, on 1 September 1998, the Committee considered a conference room paper on the matter (A/AC.172/1998/CRP.5).

Discussion

3. Although the number of meetings had gone down since 1994, the year when the last comprehensive review of the issue had been conducted and the baseline year used in the conference room paper, delays in issuing documents persisted, which was reason for concern. The Secretariat stated that although document processing capacity was adequate over the year, it was liable to be exceeded by peaks in submission.

4. The view was expressed that more detailed information on the nature and causes of delays in the issuance of pre-session documents was required. In the absence of such information, the six-week rule should not be amended. That rule was intended to give delegations and Governments the time required to consider documents adequately. While new technologies reduced delays in the transmission of documents to capitals, not all delegations were in a position to take equal advantage of those technologies.

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5. The Secretariat should determine what additional costs were incurred by document processing services as a result of the late submission of documents by author departments. Although the use of oral reports could further reduce the volume of documentation, oral reports were not an appropriate means for transmitting complex information and should not be used in such cases. When requests for written reports were made, programme managers should indicate whether it was possible to meet the deadlines in force.

Conclusions and recommendations

6. The Committee took note with appreciation of the report on the late issuance of documentation contained in document A/AC.172/1998/CRP.5.

7. The Committee welcomed the establishment of a system of focal points in substantive departments to monitor documentation and encouraged the focal points to exert their best efforts to reduce delays in the submission of documents to the processing services. The Committee recommended that this system should be extended to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services so that a departmental focal point would be available to account for delays in the processing of documents.

8. The Committee requested the Secretariat to submit to it, at its substantive session in 1999, a report containing detailed data on the reasons for delays in the issuance of documentation and an analysis of the additional costs incurred by document processing services and of other financial implications of the late submission and issuance of documents.

9. The Committee recommended that the possibility of including a footnote in delayed documents explaining the reason for the delay should be studied.